WESTERN EXPANSION AND ETHNIC CONVERGENCE IN THE POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES

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The census volumes provide materials for decennial pictures of the westward expansion of the population of the United States. The problem is the focus of analysis. Usually it has been from within the United States. Some have seen the trek of settlers across an almost empty continent, with the influence of the frontier as the unifying theme. Others have thought within the framework of the manifest destiny of a dynamic and crusading people. Here we look eastward across the Pacific and ask the questions that Asians might ask about the growth of this westward moving population. The first question concerns the role of colonialism in population growth, for we were once colonial subjects of European powers, and we absorbed many areas that we labelled territories. The second and related question is whether the ethnic groups in the expanding area of the United States maintained the demographic behavior of their parent populations or became assimilated to the larger culture and displayed its population characteristics and trends.

The statistical record is long and relatively abundant, and the laboratory of American history is complex. If the focus is Asian, the area of major interest extends in an east-west direction from the Mexican border to the Philippines; in the other direction, it extends from Alaska in the north to the Micronesian islands in the south. This analysis is limited to the comparative numbers and the convergent characteristics of the populations of the former Spanish areas from Mexico to California, together with Alaska and Hawaii. Five groups of people and their descendants are distinguished: The pre-Columbian inhabitants; immigrants from Asia; immigrants from Africa; those whose associations were with Spain and Mexico; and other European immigrants. These groups are designated in terms of their origins as indigenous, Asian, African, Spanish surname, and other European.

A Century of Growth

In 1840, some 17 million people were distributed sparsely over the 1.8 million square miles of the United States. Mexico held 800 thousand square miles to the southwest, but she lacked either the manpower for peasant settlement or the resources for industrial development. The Russian - American Company was based in Alaska, but people and supplies had to come from St. Petersberg. In China and Japan, large populations lived inadequately on limited land. Technologies were backward, capital sparse, and political organization antiquated. In this Pacific confrontation of empty areas on the one side, massive populations on the other, it was social and economic factors rather than demographic ones that were determinative. The lands were added to the United States, and their settlement came through western expansion from the Atlantic rather than eastern expansion across the Pacific.

Barriers of distance, topography, rainfall, and soil retarded settlement in the southwestern regions, Alaska, and Hawaii. There were some migrations for the gold of California and Alaska, the seals of the Pribloff Islands, and the whales of the South Seas, but great movements and rapid developments were products of the science and technology of the last century. These were frontiers of the industrial economy and the city rather than agriculture and the trade center.

The population growth of the mainland areas from Texas to California is a familiar story (Table 1). Total numbers were 378 thousand in 1850, 21 million in 1950. The population is characteristically American. The predominant numbers are European in origin, with increasing proportions of the native born and decreasing proportions of the foreign born (Table 2). The migrations of Africans follow the regularities of distance and origin that characterize their movements elsewhere.

Despite their further distances and their differences in climate and resources, the population histories of Hawaii and Alaska are variants of those of the southwestern mainland areas. The Asian labor imported into the Hawaiian Islands was proportionately larger than that brought to California, but recent migrants are predominantly European in origin. Alaska's growth on a continuing basis required the technologies of the mid-twentieth century. In recent decades, its major population increases have come from the older states to the south, and they have been European in origin. Here, also, the pattern of migration and labor force utilization for Africans is an extension of the national one.

The populations of the areas that became parts of the United States in the last century are American in ethnic composition and in growth. There are differences in the balances of the components, but these differences are related to economic and demographic developments in the nation as a whole over the last century. They are not inherent characteristics of the early histories or the contained economies of the respective areas.

Thus our first question is answered in the negative. The furthest westward migrations and the growth of the most westward populations were regional aspects of growth and redistribution in an industrializing nation. Concepts of areas as territories or of the population growth as colonial are not relevant.

Origins and Characteristics

Our second question on colonial demography within the United States concerned stability and change among peoples of diverse origins, ethnic affiliations, and cultures. Given residence in

Table 1. —Population of the former Mexican areas, Alaska, and Hawaii, 1850-1950.

(Numbers in '000)

State	1850	1860	1890	1920	1950
Former Mexican areas:					
Texas	213	604	2,236	4,663	7,711
Utah	11	40	211	449	689
New Mexico	62	94	160	360	681
Arizona	-	-	88	334	750
Nevada	-	7	47	77	160
California	93	380	1,218	3,427	10,586
Alaska	-	-	32	55	129
Hawaii	84	70	90	256	500

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census. U. S. Census of population: 1950. Vol. 1. Number of inhabitants. Tables 6 and 7.

Table 2. — Percentage composition of the populations of the former Spanish area, by origin, 1880 to 1950.

Group	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930[a/]	1940	1950
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
European	81.6	83.5	85.3	87.9	89.4	90.5	90.9	91.1
Native	66.9	69.9	73.9	75.4	76.3	78.9	82.9	84.5
Foreign	14.7	13.6	11.4	12.5	13.1	11.7	8.0	6.6
African [b/]	14.2	12.7	12.3	9.9	8.5	7.3	7.1	7.2
Indian [c/]	1.2	1.8	1.2	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.7
Chinese	2.9	2.0	1.0	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Japanese	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.4
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2

a/ Mexicans re-classified as Europeans. b/ For California, the percentages of Africans in the successive enumerations from 1880 to 1950 were 0.7, 0.9, 0.7, 0.9, 1.1, 1.4, 1.8, and 4.4. c/ American Indians.

Source of data: U.S. Bureau of the Census. U.S. Census of population: 1950. Vol. II. Characteristics of the population. Table 14 in state reports: 3. Arizona. 5. California. 28. Nevada. 31. New Mexico. 43. Texas. 44. Utah. 51. Alaska. 52. Hawaii.

areas of rapid social and economic development, were there distinctive processes of demographic adjustment that were related to origin, race, or culture? The approach to an answer involves analysis of the status of the ethnic and cultural minorities in 1950, utilizing primarily educational levels, the extent and the adequacy of the economic activity, the proportions of youth, and the ratios of children to women. Given simple measures of status by age, changes over time may be inferred. Given measures for comparable age groups, the changes associated with urbanization and the impact of regional cultural and economic factors may be inferred. Nativity may be introduced as a further variable. Comparable classifications of the European population of the United States and the western region provide standards for comparisons of the levels and the differences in characteristics by age, urban or rural residence, and nativity.

Europeans

The population of European origin is usually designated as white, occasionally as Caucasian. The overall characteristics and their changes over time need not be summarized here. It is a diverse population, with intricate patterns of differences that reflect relative participation in the developing society and economy. The proportion completing the fourth grade or less in school may be taken as an index for retardation, the proportion completing the fourth year of high school or more as an index of adjustment. The former is inversely, the latter positively correlated with the proportion of the labor force in professional, technical, and related occupations, and with income.

In the total population of European origin, or in any major segment of it, the reverse movement from older to younger age cohorts is a movement to increasing educational achievement; to higher proportions of the labor force in managerial, technical, and professional employment; and to higher income levels or income potentials. Each oncoming age groups has had greater opportunities than the preceding group, and has made greater economic progress as measured by employment, occupation, and income. Demographic characteristics are related directly to social and economic characteristics, with high proportions of youth and high child-woman ratios persisting among the groups that are educationally and economically retarded.

These differences by age exist among the native born of native parentage, the native born of foreign or mixed parentage, and the foreign born. In each instance, the accommodation to the advanced society is greater among the native than among the foreign born. If the variables are examined for nativity groups in urban, rural nonfarm, and rural farm areas, the age and nativity patterns persist, with urban populations at the highest levels, rural farm populations at the lowest levels. If the relationships are examined for the regions of the country, the patterns remain, but there are differences in levels. In general, whatever the age, nativity, or residence category, social and economic levels and demographic structure are most traditional in the South, most altered in the West.

These are the relations that existed in 1950. Analysis of the age differences in 1950 and the relationships in earlier decades indicate rapid reductions in the differences among the groups, whether classified by nativity, residence, or region. The forward movements among the younger people in once retarded groups may be regarded as convergence, or the existing differences may be regarded as time lags. In either view, there are substantial but declining differences in accommodations to opportunities and responsibilities within the modal European population.

Persons with Spanish surnames

The largest recognized minority in the southwestern states consists of Mexican immigrants and the descendants of such immigrants, along with the descendants of the early Spanish settlers. In 1950, the percentage of the population with Spanish surnames was 6 in California, 11 in Texas, 14 in Arizona and 35 in New Mexico. Numerically, there were 758 thousand in California and 1.0 million in Texas.

The differences by age within nativity, residence, and regional groups and the differences within comparable age groups by nativity, residence, and region were similar to those among all people of European origin. The proportion with minimum education advanced with age. At a specific age, it was lowest among the native born of native parentage, highest among the foreign born, intermediate among the native born of foreign or mixed parentage. This relationship held in urban, rural nonfarm, and rural farm areas in all states. Labor force participation, occupational structure, and income level showed the same regularities. So also did age structures and ratios of children to women.

Persons of Spanish surname were retarded in comparison with the general European population in the nation or in the western region, but there were major differences within the group itself. These differences presumably reflected opportunities and responsibilities in the areas of residence and selectivities among the migrants from Mexico and to the cities. In Texas, almost one-half of the men aged 25 to 44 who were native born of native parentage had 4 years or less of school. The comparable proportion in California was one in eight. Among the foreign-born men aged 25 to 44, almost two-thirds of those in California had not completed the fourth grade.

The retardation of the people with Spanish surnames was major, but so also was the upward mobility. If we take the native-born men of native parentage who were aged 45 and over and living in the rural-farm areas of New Mexico in 1950 as the closest approximation to the original culture and economy, we find a median education of 3.8 years. The median education of the foreign-born men in this same age group in New Mexico was 2.0 years. For the native born of native parentage in urban California, the median education of the men aged 25 to 44 was 10.4 years.

For the persons with Spanish surnames, advance was associated with younger age, native birth, and migration from the rural areas of Texas, Arizona, or New Mexico to urban areas in the same states or in California. Retardation

was associated with recent migration from Mexico or with continued residence in the rural areas of states that were traditionally Spanish-American centers.

Africans

The response of Africans to the opportunities of the larger economy proceeded in major part through movement to cities within or outside the South. The areas from the Mexican border to the Pacific include the Texas Africans, who are southern in economic characteristics and demographic structures, and the California Africans, who are even more highly selected in migration and more advanced in characteristics than the metropolitan Africans in the industrial region from the Great Lakes to New York.

The patterned differences of social and economic characteristics by age within residential and regional groups are found among the Africans, as among the Europeans. For any given group in any specific setting, however, the attainment of the Africans is less than that of the Europeans.

Retardation in the area of origin and upward mobility among out-migrants and their descendants are characteristic of Africans, as of Spanish Americans. Africans in the rural South are somewhat more educated than persons of Spanish surname in rural New Mexico; Africans in the urban West are somewhat more educated than the native-born Spanish Americans in the same area. In occupation and income, though, the barriers to African advance seem to be substantially greater than those for Europeans of Spanish surname.

Asians

The Africans came from diverse cultures in Africa, but the practices of slavery replaced native languages, religions, and behavior with appropriate modifications of the English language, the Christian religion, and the mores of the South. Asians also came from diverse cultures, but they came in successive time periods as contract laborers, and their associations were within their own groups or with members of the dominant European culture.

The Chinese and the Japanese who came to Hawaii or to the West Coast were lowly members of their respective societies. Among those aged 65 or over in 1950, less than one per cent had school attendance beyond the fourth grade level. Among those aged 25 to 44, the median years of school completed were equal to those of the Europeans. This was true for the West Coast and for Hawaii. However, the pursuit of education was most assiduous among the Japanese. In the urban areas of the West, less than two per cent of the men aged 25 to 44 had four years or less of schooling, while more than three-fourths had four years of high school or more. The Chinese had higher proportions with low education, lesser proportions with higher education, but substantially the same median level.

Among Chinese and Japanese on the mainland, eight or nine per cent of the men aged 25 to 44 who were in the labor force reported professional, technical, and related occupations. In Hawaii, the percentage of the male labor force in professional and related occupations was 5.4 for Japanese, 10.7 for Chinese.

Both in California and in Hawaii, the ethnic identities of the Chinese and the Japanese were being preserved, but accommodation had gone so far that differences among Chinese, Japanese, and Europeans were not great.

In Hawaii and in the West, the Filipinos were more recent migrants. In 1950, the proportions who were laborers were high, the proportions who had been born and educated in urban areas low. On the mainland, educational levels, unemployment, occupational structure, and income placed the Filipinos below any other ethnic or linquistic minority. The relative retardation was also severe in Hawaii. Presumably the responsible factors included the lateness of the migrations and the brief periods in the new areas, though the differences among the adjustments of Chinese and Japanese in Hawaii and in California suggest that cultural factors may also be involved.

Indigenous peoples

The indigenous populations are ethnically and culturally diverse, and their contacts with the in-migrants to their areas have differed in type, extent, and duration. Here we shall consider separately the Indians of the mainland area from the Mexican border to California, the native peoples of Alaska, and the Hawaiians.

If the Indians of the United States or the West are considered as groups, the familiar patterns of the upwardly mobile populations appear. The younger are more educated than the older. For any age group, the educational levels and the types of economic activity are more advanced for the urban than for the rural population. Proportions of youth are less in the urban areas, and ratios of children to women are lower. In relative terms, the Indian population is less advanced than the African. In all residence areas of the West, the proportion of men aged 25 to 44 who are poorly educated is higher. The characteristics of men aged 15 to 24 as contrasted with those of men aged 25 to 44 suggest substantial upward mobility among the Africans, relatively little among the Indians. Moreover, in all residential areas the proportions of youth and the ratios of children to women are higher among the Indians than among the Africans.

The reservation Indians show less accommodation to the industrial economy than any other group recognizable in the data for the southwestern area. As of 1950, 52 per cent of the Navajo men aged 25 and over had not completed a single grade of school. Almost three-tenths of the men aged 14 and over reported that they had neither worked nor sought work during the week preceding the census. More than half of those with income reported amounts below $500, while less than two per cent reported incomes of $3000 or more. The median income was $471. Forty-six per cent of all the Navajo were below age 15, and there were 829 children below age 5 for each 1,000 women aged 15 to 44.

The indigenous peoples of Alaska — Aleut, Eskimo, and Indian — have had only late and limited contact with the constructive aspects of modern society and economy. As a group, their retardation is greater than that of the general In-

dian population of the West, but less than that of the Navajo. Among men aged 25 and over in 1950, one-fourth had not completed a single grade of school and one-half had not completed the fourth grade. There was mobility here, though, for the percentage of men with less than a grade of school was 67 per cent at ages 75 and over but only 14 per cent at ages 25 to 29. Four-fifths of the boys and girls aged 7 to 15 were enrolled in school.

The residences and the economic activities of the indigenous groups in Alaska were distinct from those of the Europeans. Three-fifths of the employed civilian labor force were in hunting and trapping, fishing, and manufacturing, mainly the canning and preserving of fish. However, 29 per cent of the men aged 14 and above reported that they were neither working nor seeking work. Sixteen per cent of those who reported themselves as in the civilian labor force were unemployed. Some 13 per cent of the men reported themselves as without income, while the median income of those with income was less than one-third that of the Europeans. High proportions of youth and high ratios of children to women further attested the material retardation of the Aleuts, the Eskimos, and the Indians.

The isolation of the indigenous population is greatest in Alaska, the assimilation most advanced in Hawaii. In 1849, 98 per cent of the people in the islands were native born of Hawaiian parentage.[1] In 1950, two per cent were pure Hawaiian, 15 per cent part Hawaiian. In numerical terms unmixed Hawaiians declined from 79 thousand in 1840 to 12 thousand in 1950, while part Hawaiians increased from less than 500 in 1849 to 74 thousand in 1950. By the latter year, 86 per cent of the Hawaiians were classified as mixed.

In 1950, the Hawaiians were an intermediate population, below the Europeans, the Chinese, and the Japanese on the one hand, above the Filipinos on the other. This relationship existed in educational level, labor force participation, occupational structure, and income. Within the Hawaiian group itself, the usual patterns of differences prevailed. Advance in any characteristic was greater among the younger than the older people, greater among the mixed than the pure ethnic stock, and greater in metropolitan Oahu than in the other islands.

Interpretation of the significance of formal tabulations of data are difficult in Hawaii because of the intricacy of the relations among the groups that compose the population. Straightforward demographic analysis is seldom possible. Persons of European origin lose to all other groups, for in mixtures of white and nonwhite, the classification of the children is that of the nonwhite parent. Persons of Asian and African origin gain from the Europeans but lose to the Hawaiians, for any person with either parent Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian is Hawaiian by definition. Vital statistics compound the difficulties, for the data on births are tabulated by the ethnic classification of the infants. Biological accretions to the Hawaiian group give it a high component of youth and a high ratio of children to women. In 1950, more than 46 per cent were below age 15, while there were 860 children age 5 for each 1,000 women aged 15 to 44.

The difficulties in classification and interpretation are products of the distinctive characteristics of the Hawaiians, their cultural assimilation and their biological intermixture. Indexes of dissimilarity for the residential distribution in the census tracts of metropolitan Hawaii in 1950 show maximum segregation among the Europeans, minimum segregation among Hawaiians (Table 3). Among the non-European groups, the maximum segregation is that of each group with the Filipinos, while the minimum segregation is that among Hawaiians, Chinese, and Japanese.

Convergence and Persistence

In the area from the Mexican border to California, in Alaska, and in Hawaii, the relative status of the population groups reflects the nearness to and the accessibility of the opportunities of the advanced economy. Neither area of origin, native culture, nor race are determinants of absolute or relative status. However, in no group measurable in census tabulations are origin, culture, or race irrelevant to levels of achievement and presumably to status.

The recognizable groups that we have considered are the dominant peoples of European origin, the Africans, the people with Spanish surnames, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Indians, Aleuts, Eskimos, and Hawaiians. In all the major groups there are patterns of differences that persist over time. Advance to the modal characteristics of the Europeans occurs primarily through the adjustments and the achievements of youth. It is thus a continuing process. For any given age groups at any given time, however, advance has been greater for the native than for the foreign born, for the urban than for the rural farm population, for the West than for the South or the total population, for areas of in-migration rather than for areas of original settlement. These relationships exist for educational level; the adequacy of economic activity as measured by labor force participation rates and the unemployment of those in the labor force; the proportion of men in the labor force who are in professional, technical, and related occupations; and the level and structure of the income distribution. Demographic structure is related and has the same intricate patterns of differences. Here the specific variables examined were the proportion of youth in the total population and the ratios of children to women.

Among all groups in all areas there was movement toward the levels of the European population within the same area. Migration and redistribution were placing increasing proportions of all groups in the urban areas of the more favored regions and so producing overall convergence in regional or national figures. However, no group in any area had achieved the full stature of the comparable group of European origin. In general, retardation was greatest where the movement required for identity was most difficult. Backwardness was most persistent among groups who continued to live in their areas of habitual residence where traditional social structures and economic discriminations precluded advance in place and discouraged movement. These included the persons of Spanish surname and the Africans in the rural farm areas of Texas, the reservation Indians of the southwest states, and the indigenous peoples of Alaska. Not even in these groups, however, was there the relative fixity of residence and characteristics that existed among Asian

Table 3 — Indexes of residential segregation, census tracts of Metropolitan Honolulu, 1950.[a]

Group	Hawaiian	European	Chinese	Japanese	Filipino
Hawaiian	-	.462	.361	.314	.415
European	-	-	.527	.492	.596
Chinese	-	-	-	.321	.546
Japanese	-	-	-	-	.392
Filipino	-	-	-	-	-

a. If X_i and Y_i are uncumulated percentage distributions for census tracts, Δ is the sum of the positive differences between the two percentage distributions. For algebraic and geometric derivations, see: Duncan, Otis D. "The measurement of population distribution." Population Studies 11 (1):27 - 45. 1957. See especially pp. 29-32.

Source of data: U.S. Bureau of the Census. U.S. Census of population: 1950. Vol. III. Census tract statistics. Chapter 62. Honolulu, T. H. census tracts. Table 1.

peasants in the century or so prior to the Second World War.

The question of our hypothetical Asian colleague concerning colonial demography among populations within the United States can be answered in the negative. Little in the American experience is directly relevant to the evaluation of the future of Asian populations. The social and economic advance of minority groups here occurred largely in association with movements to areas and regions of greater opportunity. The advance of massive Asian populations requires overall transformation. Problems cannot be solved by quick removal of practically all the peasants to industrial employment in metropolitan areas. Hence transfer of findings on adaptation and transformation within the United States to Asian areas can be made only with extreme caution.

The present characteristics and the future problems of the Navajo, together with those of the Aleuts, the Eskimo, and the Indians of Alaska, may seem Asian in nature and magnitude. If only present demographic structures and vital rates are considered, the similarities are striking. In Alaska, populations living in traditional ways with inadequate and declining resources have the age structures and the high birth rates appropriate to their ways of life. Public health activities have reduced or are reducing death rates to low levels. However, the differences between these American problems and the population problems of Asia are more striking than the similarities. Here, the capital, the scientific knowledge, and the techniques are available for alternative ways of life within the native areas. Migration from these areas is quite feasible, provided there are psychological, educational, and cultural preparations for life in different areas at different occupations.

The major area for research is no longer the convergence of the groups but the persistence of group differences. Here our quantitative data are seriously inadequate. If adjustment is associated with migration, and group identification is basically a social definition, those who are assimilated disappear in some unknown proportion from the parent group. Moreover, there may be major artificialities in conclusions derived from the study of groups recognized as minorities. Further analysis of the formation of a population from peoples of diverse origins requires coordinate analysis for the descendants of the nationality groups of European origin along with the African, Asian, Spanish, and indigenous minorities. For this, ethnic or cultural statistics must be extended to the total population rather than limited to the problem minorities.

1/ Schmitt, Robert C. "A census comparison of Hawaii's citizens." Paradise of the Pacific 65 (6):28-29. June, 1953.

Sources

U.S. Bureau of the Census. Census of population: 1950. Vol. 1. Number of inhabitants. Vol. II. Characteristics of the population. 1. United States Summary. 3. Arizona. 5. California. 28. Nevada. 31. New Mexico. 43. Texas. 44. Utah. 51. Alaska. 52. Hawaii. Vol. IV. Special reports. Part 3, Chapter A. Nativity and parentage. Chapter B. Nonwhite population by race. Chapter C. Persons of Spanish Surname.